



There are a variety of steps you may need to take before starting a new business in the City of New Bern. We have listed some resources below to help guide you through the process.

Zoning

An approved zoning permit is required prior to opening a new business. There are a variety of zoning regulations that apply to businesses, to include temporary uses such as mobile food vendors and sales tents. It is the responsibility of the prospective business owner(s) to properly identify the correct zoning district needed for the type of business (use) they intend to operate. Since zoning regulations change from one community to another, we require all prospective business owners to contact our Zoning Administrator at pandz@newbernnc.gov or 252-639-7582 to ensure you have identified the correct zoning district for your business. [Click here for a zoning permit application](#). Turnaround time is approximately five to seven business days.

Site Plan Submittal

Site Plan Review is required for all new commercial development projects involving construction, exterior alteration (to include outdoor seating and parking lot modifications), relocation, occupancy, or change of use of any building or commercial space. Site plans will be reviewed to ensure that they are in compliance with City ordinances and state laws. Turnaround time is approximately one to three months.

Building Permits

Following zoning approval, a completed building permit application and plans must be submitted to the Inspections Division for review. Plans should include all improvements and features of the building. Building Plans will be evaluated in accordance with the North Carolina State Building Code. A building permit is needed for new construction, additions, renovations, change of business in an existing building, sign permits, among other scenarios. Please note this also applies to commercial upfits. Turnaround time is approximately two weeks.

Commercial Fire

For commercial properties, an initial fire inspection will be conducted and then periodically thereafter. Fire Inspectors identify fire hazards and life safety issues of buildings throughout the city. Inspectors document discrepancies and educate business owners about the importance of complying with the code. The Fire Prevention Bureau utilizes the International Fire Code (with North Carolina Amendments) as the primary reference guide for fire inspections. The more frequent discrepancies include exits, fire protection systems, housekeeping, and electrical.

Residential Fire

Residential inspections are conducted, upon request, for individuals who are pursuing a state license for operating any of, but not limited to, the following facilities: Foster Homes, Group Homes Assisted Living Homes, Alternative Family Living Homes (AFL), Adult Day Cares, or Child Day Cares. Inspections are conducted initially to ensure that all federal, state, and local requirements for Fire and Life Safety are met, then on an annual basis thereafter. For more information contact the Fire Department at 252-639-2931.

Historic District

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) will be required for any exterior modifications to the building or site, including signage and tree removal. [Click here for Historic District website link](#). For more information contact Matt Schelly at schellym@newbernnc.gov or 252-639-7583. Turnaround time can be up to seven weeks or longer depending on the project type.

Signage

A sign permit is required for most types of permanent signage associated with businesses. A building permit may be required for wall signs and freestanding signs as well. Part of the building permit process includes a zoning review to ensure compliance with City Zoning regulations. For more information email: panz@newbernnc.gov or call 252-639-7582. Turnaround time is approximately five to seven business days.

Trash

The City of New Bern/GFL Environmental also collects and disposes of approximately 23,000 cubic yards of commercial waste per month, through front-load dumpsters, ranging in capacity from two to eight yards, up to six times weekly, depending on individual service needs. Each business is responsible for providing its own container, either owned or leased, which is collected by contractor for a set fee per cubic yard, established by the Board of Aldermen, which is billed on the customer's city utility bill. For more information contact Public Works at 252-639-7501.

Home Business License

A business operated from home must obtain approval from the City of New Bern's Planning Division after completing a Home Occupancy Permit. For more information contact panz@newbernnc.gov or call 252-639-7582. Turnaround time is approximately five to seven business days.

Encroachment Permits

The Public Works Department issues driveway permits and encroachment construction requests. If your proposed business will impact a public right-of-way such as with outdoor dining along a sidewalk or street or will require a new driveway onto a public street, please contact Public Works at 252-639-7501.

Local Licenses/Permits

Alcohol License:

If you are engaged in the business of selling beer and wine, you must first obtain a permit from the NC Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission ([NCABC](#)). After obtaining this permit, you must apply for a beer and wine business privilege license from the City of New Bern Utility Business Office located at 606 Fort Totten Drive.

Food Service:

Restaurants, food trucks, food stands, mobile food units, temporary food permits, and catering operations are regulated by the Division of Environmental Health Food and Lodging Section. This entity is a division of the Craven County Health Department and is responsible for inspecting food and lodging establishments within Craven County. Contact information: 2818 Neuse Blvd. New Bern, NC 28561 or 252-636-4936. All food trucks are required to have an approved zoning permit including authorization from the property owner.